

House Agriculture Committee Hearing on SB 142

Chairman Kerns and Committee Members: Wagner, V.C. Blyton, Clark, Evans, Fitzpatrick, Furey, Hale, Hoven, Howard, MacDonald, McClafferty, McNiven, Noonan, Pease-Lopez, Randall, Read, Salomon, Small, Smith, Williams

My name is Allen Schallenberger from Sheridan, MT. I did the first intensive grizzly bear research in Montana outside National Parks from 1975-1980 and my MT grizzly bear and black bear experience dates to 1963. I made the original recommendation for bear conflict specialists in Montana.

In my review of grizzly bear literature and while attending a Bozeman meeting on conflict grizzly bears in 2010, I learned Wyoming has been ahead of Montana since 2005 in reporting grizzly bear conflicts and keeping the public informed. I learned that northwest MT has done a better job of informing the public than has southwest Montana. There is a great need for this bill and I strongly support it including informing elected public safety officers our sheriffs on a timely basis especially on problem grizzly bears.

Moving grizzly and black bears that cause conflict is popular but as the better habitat is filled up with bears the process becomes less successful and results more expensive. Also grizzly bears food habits as I mentioned earlier are considerably different in southwest and northwest Montana and the conflicts are different. Black bears also operate differently in the two areas.

I believe that the data shows Yellowstone area grizzlies are more aggressive also. Since 1992 in Wyoming 52 people have been mauled, since 1991 27 people in SW MT and from 2000-2009 4 people were mauled in southeast Idaho. One person died in both MT and WY in 2010. The mauling numbers far surpass what has been found in northern MT. However two people were killed in Glacier National Park and one on the Blackfoot Clearwater WMA during the last two decades. People mauled by grizzly bears suffer severe injuries in 50 per cent of the cases and long hospital stays which are very expensive. In the Yellowstone area 87 grizzlies have been shot in self defense since 1998. The 15 bears killed in 2010 included mistaken ID bears so the number is slightly less than 87 total self defense cases. The grizzly injury data contrast with the majority of black bear attacks which result in mild bites or scratches except for predatory black bear attacks which are also severe.

In the Kalispell area most of the grizzly problems are with the bears getting into bird feeders or killing chickens according to the bear specialist there. On the Rocky Mountain Front and in SW MT and Wyoming grizzlies kill more large livestock such as sheep and cattle. They also kill a lot of elk and moose calves and some adults in SW MT and Wyoming. In conjunction with wolves and other predators they have had severe impacts on Yellowstone area livestock herds and also elk and moose populations on the Upper Gallatin River and also in Yellowstone National Park.

Better records and notice are needed for grizzly bears and black bears which are relocated. Recently people on the FWP staff in Helena have told me that they cannot release accurate details on conflict bears on their website because the public might get mistaken impressions. I firmly believe the public deserves timely, truthful and detailed information on each conflict bear. Unfortunately MT FWP has chosen to list only five broad categories for bear conflicts on their website i.e., preventative, human conflict, livestock conflict, research/augmentation and incidental/non-target capture. They believe that you should not know what each of the problem bears did to deserve relocation or translocation. As a many decade native of MT I think that the recent arrivals who are putting out this information policy are wrong. Also the bear ear tag identification number needs to be on the website and in other information they put out. Probably sheriffs and news media will be most concerned about grizzly bear conflicts as opposed to most black bear conflicts.

I found that there was no systematic data collection, data storage or annual report writing system throughout Montana on conflict bears. The last economic survey analysis I could find of handling conflict grizzly bears was in 1991 in northwest Montana when it was judged that each grizzly bear trapping and movement cost \$1,038. and that did not include any wages and only included two hours of aerial tracking time. We need accurate and detailed annual reports which analyze the program and let the public and legislature know the pluses and minuses and the costs both monetary and in problems resulting from FWP actions with individually marked and numbered bears. In the senate we heard much talk from the FWP representative that having to report on conflict bears moved was extremely difficult. In 2010 in all of Montana 28 grizzly bears and 51 black bears were relocated or translocated. With 696 full-time employees, several bear specialists and bear research biologists and many wildlife management and research biologists I believe they should be up to writing an annual report on conflict bears in a timely manner. I have the 2010 report for Wyoming here today and would like to enter it in the hearing record.

Montana FWP and the Audubon society told the senate natural resources committee that this bill tries to give out the grizzly bear radio frequencies so people can kill them and also that providing the relocations of these bears on an annual map many months later would somehow allow people to track grizzly bears and kill them. This bill does neither of those things. We just want a record of which grizzly bears have radio transmitters and where the problem grizzly bears go after release. As the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee stated at their Missoula meeting in January 2011, the bears are recovered and people need to spend less time worrying about how they die. Some are going to die because they are moving into areas which have severe conflicts. **Contrary to what some MT bear plans have stated it is not desirable to have grizzly bears everywhere in western and southern Montana.** Thank you for the opportunity to testify.